

THE
VVAY TO
A BLESSED
ESTATE IN
THIS LIFE.

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THAT which our
Lord Iesus from
Heaven writ vn-
to the Church of
Sardis; Thou hast

Rev. 3. 1.

*a name that thou livest, but art
dead, may be truly spoken of the
greater sort of not-counterfeit
Professors of the Faith in our
time: for it is cleare by the Text,
that this is not spoken of hypo-
crites, who are starke dead, but*

Many drow
sie profes-
sors.

of such who having some life remaining in them, are in a dead sleepe: for these of whom I speake, take good paines to keepevp a name of Christianitie, both in the exercises of Religion, and in their outward behaviour, (though in both there be much fayling,) but in very truth there is but a little life of faith and loue in all their Profession, as may appaere in their cold and vncomfortable prayers, in their wandering and drowfie hearing of the Word, and vnfruitfull receiving of the Sacraments, and much more in their abuse and neglect of the secret exercises of Prayer, reading, and meditation by themselves, and conference with others, seldome deeply bewailing their estate, lesse reioycing in the assurance of their salvation by Christ, as seldome delighting in God, with a zeale to set forth his glorie in every part of their

their life.

: Though this bee the state of the greater part of those that haue some truth of grace in them, yet may we say again, that there are with vs, (as in the Church of *Sardis*) *a few names that haue not defiled their garments*, that is, doe liue vnrebukably, and walke worthy their holy calling, having a sweet feeling of Gods favour vnto them, and so can boldly come vnto him in time of need, with assurance that he doth graciously respect them, their prayers, and vnfeigned obedience; who likewise doe more delight themselves in God, then in all earthly things, accounting it their greatest griefe to offend him, and greatest ioy to please him; possessing their soules with confidence and patience in their greatest trialls, looking for the appearing of Christ.

This is that blessed estate to be

A few worthy.

What a
blessed life
here may
be attained

Desire by
many, not
attained.

How this
life is at-
tained.

injoyed in this life, which God hath prepared, (though in diuers measures) for the faithful, all which may well be contained in this short sentence of the *Psalmist*. *Psalm 37. 4. Delight thy selfe in the Lord, and he will giue thee thy hearts desire:* which I doubt not but all true Christians (when they haue well considered it) would be glad to attaine vnto: But either through ignorance of the way how to attaine it; or through negligence; not putting in practise what they know: they spend many yeares, either securely, or vncomfortably, seldome attaining to that heauenly feasting, which (if they were wise) might bee their daily refreshing: whose estate I much tendring, doe endeavour to shew them, how this happie life may bee attained; which I conceiue to be only by a more plentifull feeding vpon Christ by faith. It is without
que-

question, that all and every part of our spirituall life is in Christ, *of whose fulnesse we receiue grace for grace*: and this is as cleare, that we receiue no grace first or last from Christ, but by beleeving: in which respect Christ is truly and principally said to be our spirituall food, and beleeving to be the true feeding vpon him. Which being so, it necessarily followes, that feeding seldome or weakely, we cannot haue much spirituall strength: and otherwise feeding plentifully and soundly, wee shall be fat, and flourishing in grace, and so attaine vnto the blessed life spoken of.

For the better vnderstanding and practising whereof, this is specially to be considered, How every true beleeuer may daily, yea, oft in the day, by faith feed vpon Christ, that so he may receiue from him all spirituall nourishment, for his refreshing

Ioh. 1. 16.

Ioh. 6. 27.

35

34.

How to
feed oft in
the day on
Christ.

and strengthening to every good worke.

This is done by setting before vs those sweet promises, which God hath made to vs, for the strengthening of our faith in all our necessities: and, so particularly to apply them to our selues. Whereby we may comfortably assure our selues, that we shall enioy that which God hath promised. Wherein we are first to get the true meaning of that which is promised.

Secondly, To see wee haue a good warrant, that this is promised to vs, that therevpon we may conclude, we shall certainly enioy that which God hath promised, seeing he is faithfull who hath promised.

Example.

But seeing this is not well conceived by many, I wil make it plaine by example. I Cor. I. 30. it is said; *But of him are yee in Christ Iesus, who of God is made vnto vs wisdom, and righteousness,*

nesse, and sanctification, and redemption. In which is as much sayd as may be conceived, or desired; the meaning whereof is, that every true beleever, is by Gods spirit made a living member of Christ Iesus, from and in whom, hee is made by God a true partaker of all things needfull to salvation: that whereas he is by nature foolish, guiltie, filthy, and in bondage, now in Christ he is made perfectly wise, righteous, holy, freed from all his enemies, and so restored to full happinelle. This promise of God being clearly vnderstood, must now be applied particularly by every beleever to himselfe, thus: Seeing God who is all-sufficient, and faithfull, hath in his Word, which is Truth it selfe, promised these great benefits (in which all are contained) to every true beleever, therefore I who doe truly though weakely, beleue in
to Christ,

Christ, may boldly assure my selfe, that all these be mine, and therefore I shall not want any thing needfull for my present comfort, or eternall happinesse. Which whosoever doth daily practise in this manner to maintaine, and increase his faith by application of this, and all other of Gods promises, he shall daily more and more enjoy in this life that blessed estate we speake of.

Pray for
faith.

But for as much as faith is the gift of God, and we cannot further beleue then wee bee drawne by Gods spirit, therefore we must ioyne often and fervent prayer, that God by this meanes would increase our faith.

Not easie.

This may seeme easie to be performed, but vpon better triall, it wil not be found so easie to doe it effectually; for besides our own great vntowardnesse to beleue, I cannot think
of

of any dutie, wherein our common Adversary, will vse more cunning, and diligence to hinder vs, then in this: either by keeping vs from the worke, or beguiling vs in it: whereby it comes to passe, that very few doe (to any good purpose) practise the same.

Amongst many lettes which hinder the faithfull practise hereof, I obserue these two, in two diuers sorts of beleevers. The former in those, who not sufficiently feeling their wants, and too much contented with their estate, doe not so prize Christ, and this blessed estate in him, as may moue them to take this paines, and therefore neuer reach vnto this growth in grace, wherevnto they might come, if the fault were not in themselves. The other let, is in those who highly prizing the benefit, and earnestly labouring for it, are by the sense of their owne

Two chiefe
lettis.

1. Not prizing *Christ*.

2. Our vnworthines.

vnworthinelle, so kept downe,
that they cannot with any hope
looke vp, for so great a bles-
sing.

Remoue of
the first let.

For the remooving of both
these lettes, the first sort are to
bethinke themselves, what an
vncomfortable account it will
be, when God shall call them to
it to see how many yeares they
haue spent, with little growth
in grace, either to the glorie of
God, or good example to o-
thers, or to the peace of their
owne soules. Whereas on the
other side, they might haue at-
tained vnto such a sweet life, as
would haue beene a heauen vp-
on earth; namely, *To reioyce al-
wayes in the Lord.*

Of the se-
cond let.

For the other poore soules,
who are kept downe with the
sense of their owne vnworthi-
nelle, they are to know, that all
Gods promises, are free and vn-
deserved, so as no vnworthines
ought to hinder them from be-
lee-

leaving: yea, rather they that haue the most sencie of their owne vnworthinesse, haue most encouragement to beleue, for that voice of Christ, *Come vnto me all you that are weary and heauie laden, and I will ease you,* serues not onely for our first conversion, but in all our distresses whatsoever, throughout the whole course of our life.

Mat. 11. 28.

If any escape both these lets, and goe about this worke, then will Satan vse all his skill to beguile both sorts: such as are weake and heauie hearted, soone discouraged, hee tempts and perswades, they labour in vaine, and doe not beleue, when indeed they doe, as shall appeare. The other sort who are too well conceited, and light hearted, Satan labours to perswade, that they haue more faith then indeed they haue, and that their case is better then in truth it is.

Satan will beguile;

Some that they beleue not;

Others, that they haue more faith then they haue

It shall bee therefore the wisdom of all who will not be decciued, carefully to examine and try themselues; which that they may the better doe, let them consider of these marks that follow: whereby either sort may certainly iudge of themselves.

Foure
markes of
faith not
seene.

1 Griefe
for want of
faith.

2. Constant
labour for
it.

3. True
loue to
God.

For such as conscionably endeavour to nourish their faith in such manner as hath beene shewed, and yet finde no comfort, but feare they doe not beleeue, (when as indeed they doe) these are to discern their faith by such secret operations, as doe certainly shew faith to be there, though it be not seene: namely, An vnfeigned griefe for the want of faith, with an vncessant indeavour for the attaining of it. Againe, A reverent esteeme of God, and heartie affection of vnfeigned loue to him, which cannot be without some former apprehension of Gods

Gods loue to them, which is in many, (though they see it not). And lastly, A tender Conscience, fearing to displease God, even in smaller matters, which others little regard. Whosoever shall find these fruits, (which cannot come but from faith) may certainly know, that there is a roote of faith grounded in their hearts, though they see it not. But such as haue no feeling of their faith, and see no such effects in their liues, haue iust cause to thinke that they haue no faith at all.

As for the other sort, who are too well perswaded of themselves, that they finde comfort in meditating on Gods promises, whereas indeed they deceiue themselves, and haue not that faith they imagine, as their fruits doe shew.

This may bee discerned by these notes;

First, True comfort is vsually

4. A tender conscience.

No fruits,
no faith.

Notes of
true and
false com-
fort.

1. True, is
hardly got.

ly very hardly gotten, with much prayer and labour, and it is oft a long time before this be felt: therefore they who vpon their first thoughts on these promises, finde comfort that they haue part in them, may so farre mistrust, all is not sound, till they shall see some better prooffe thereof: which if they doe not, but for all this will be confident, that all is well, it is to be feared, their comfort is not sound.

2. Feare of deceit.

For this is another propertie of that true comfort which springs from faith, especially in young and weake beleevers, that they (so highly valewing the benefit,) are very feareful of being deceived, and must see good evidence, before they will be perswaded, that they haue this saving faith.

3. Poore in spirit, mourne, and lowly.

Whereof if they shall be perswaded, yet therewithal is ioyned such a feeling of the weakenesse of

of their faith, and so of all grace, as makes them poore in their owne eyes, & mourne for their wants, thinking lowly of themselves, and more highly reverencing the graces of God in others. Whereas they who be deceived, are as the *Laodiceans*, rich and wanting nothing, and so be merry, and too light hearted, thinking too well of themselves, and too slenderly of others, better then themselves.

Another sure marke of sensible faith and comfort, is this, That they that haue tasted of it, can never be satisfied, but still hunger and labour for more: none more diligently vse all good meanes to grow in grace then they: Even as the strong and most healthfull bodie, doth feed better then the weake and sickly. But such as being well satisfied with that they haue, & feele no hunger, nor labour for more, it is evident their faith
and

4 Hunger
and labour
for more.

5. Answerable obedience.

and comfort are not good.

To proceed, and not to gather all that might be added hereto, this shall serue for all; That as like fire, like heate: so like faith, like life, great or small. So that where there is strong faith, there must needs be great obedience, and therefore whosoever hee be that is carelesse of his conversation, and barren in the fruits of a holy life, his faith must needs be weake, if not dead.

Wherefore to conclude, I advise every one, who by these markes shall discerne himselfe to bee deceived, with fancie instead of faith; to goe about this worke more seriously, and to lay a better foundation of faith, and not to say, hee hath found comfort, till he can bring good witnessetheteof. Which whosoever shall neglect, shall in the end (to say no more) lament his folly, when hee who seeing his error, shall more carefully and
con-

constantly put in practise this
maine dutie of daily feeding vp
on *Christ*, shall grow in grace,
and attaine to that blessed life
here, whereof we speake,
besides eternall life,
the full reward
of all his
labours.

(:.)

FINIS.